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O 021308Z MAR 06zFM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3913
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUEHVEN/U&MISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 0909
RHMFIS/DO USEUCOM VAIHINGEN CE IMOEDIATE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MGLESWKRTTH UK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MINSK 000225

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2016Q

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PRED](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION OFFICIAL TELLS EUR DAS KRAEER ELECTIONS
WILL BE DEMOCRATIC

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Comment

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¶11. (C) Lozovik gave@DAS Kramer the same story about the &transparencyQ and &freeness8 of BelaRus, election process That he haq given EmboffS in the past. Although he has used his previous meetings with EmboffQ to cautiously insult the U.S., election process and legislation, LozovikQ seemed taken aback by Kramer,s pointed co-ments on Lukashenko,s regime and his warning about travel restricti/ns. Lozorik did not apPear to be concerned about the threat of travel restrictions, but in previous meetings with Emboffs, CEC Head Lidiya Yermoshina expressed her disappointment with being banned from traveling to Western Europe. Following the meeting, LozoVik commented to independent online news source Belapan that the CEC agreed with DAS that the presidential elections should not be marred With violence or fraud.

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WILL BE DEMOCRATIB

quipping that the U.S. had no doubt one of the contenders (Lukashdnko) would be registered.

OSCE InsUltts Belarts

¶16. (C) Lozovik strersed that the OSCE should work with the GKB and follow its laws and not support unregistered organizations. The GOB saw it necessary to invhte the OSCE, but Lozovik felt the OSCE gave negative, rather than objective, assessments of Belarus, elections. He accused the OSCE of souring its relationship with Belarus after giving a &biased8 report about the 2001 presidential elections and called the OSCE,s recommendatinns on electoral reform in Belarus &insulting.8 However, Lozovik claimed that the 2006 OSCE observation missioj seemed to have a &nicer8 attitude towards Belarus and was more respectful.

&Aggressive8 Means Violent

¶17. (C) Lozovik viewed 10 Coalition candidate AleksandrQ Milinkevich,s campaign team,s call to supporters to &aggressivaly observe8 the elections as a call for Violejce. Kramer told Lozovik that the term &aggressive8 had other meanings than violence and it was not unusual for oppksition activists to demand &aggressive8 observation.

If they did not pursue an aggressive campaign, they would not be allowed to observe at all.

Odds On Lukashenko

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18. (C) Kramer noted it was not unusual for an incumbent elected official to have certain advantages over his opponents in an electoral race, but stressed that the current political environment weighed heavily in favor of Lukashenko, who has unlimited media access and significant state resources at his disposal. Referring to demands by opposition presidential candidates Kozulin and Milinkevich, Kramer asked Lozovik why Lukashenko did not give up his duties as President during the campaign as stipulated in the electoral code. (Note: Belarus, electoral code stipulates that all candidates must abstain from their normal work duties while campaigning, except for the incumbent who is running for a second term. The electoral code does not specify the conditions for a two-term incumbent.) Lozovik pointed out that the 2004 referendum gave Lukashenko the possibility to run for a third term, but the electoral code had not yet been changed accordingly. The CEC Secretary said Lukashenko did not need to leave his post because Belarus & cannot be without a leader.⁸ Kramer reiterated that the U.S. does not recognize the 2004 referendum and to use it as a basis for changing the electoral code did not give the U.S. any & confidence.⁸

DAS Threatens Travel Restrictions, CEC Laughs

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19. (C) Kramer warned Lozovik that the U.S. and EU would hold GOB officials responsible if elections become violent and/or fraudulent. Citizens have the full right to protest peacefully, and as a member of the OSCE, the GOB should respect this right. Kramer warned that there would be serious consequences, including increased travel restrictions, for those GOB officials who participated in or facilitated fraudulent elections and a violent response to peaceful protests following the election. Lozovik began laughing until DAS told him to take the warning seriously, as it was the U.S. and EU's united message on Belarus and it would be a & great mistake to underestimate it.

110. (C) Lozovik strongly reacted, saying it was foolish for powerful countries like the EU and U.S. to resort to & such games of telling Belarus how to live. Lozovik agreed that violence was unacceptable and urged Kramer to disclose any intelligence he had about possible violence or bloodshed. Lozovik opined that it was better to & prevent bloodshed rather than to cry about it afterwards and accused the opposition of enticing people to protest. Lozovik maintained that recent surveys indicate Lukashenko would win with such a high percentage that there was no need for election falsifications. DAS cautioned Lozovik, noting that if a country relied too much on survey results, the country could soon do away with elections. Lozovik agreed with a Russian saying, & Tell a big lie first and then give the statistics afterwards.⁸

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Comment

111. (C) Lozovik gave DAS Kramer the same story about the & transparency and & freedom of Belarus, election process that he has given Embiffs in the past. Although he has used his previous meetings with Embiffs to be concerned about the threat of travel restrictions, but in previous meetings with Embiffs, CEC Head Lidiya Yermoshina expressed her disappointment with being banned from traveling to Western Europe. Following the meeting, Lozovik commented to independent online news source Belapan that the CEC agreed with DAS that the presidential elections should not be marred

with violence or fraud.
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